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Why 'The Other'?

The Other takes its name from **The East Village Other**, a pioneering 1960s counterculture newspaper. Like our namesake, which amplified marginalized voices, we celebrate cannabis culture's evolution from the fringes to the mainstream. Our name reclaims and honors the journey of the cannabis community from "the other"—once stigmatized and hidden—to a position of growing acceptance and legitimacy.

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CONSCIOUS MUSINGS

From Seed to Skyline

The Growing Season

by Peter Shafran

When we launched The Other Magazine, I envisioned creating something that captured the unique spirit of Hudson Valley's cannabis culture. We've quickly grown beyond those rural roots to navigate the concrete canyons of NYC as naturally as the back roads of Ulster County.

Our story, like the plant itself, refuses boundaries. What began as a love letter to the Hudson Valley's cannabis renaissance has evolved into a bridge between upstate innovation and downtown energy, connecting traditional cultivation with cutting-edge consumption.

As our third issue rolls out alongside 4/20 celebrations and our May 28 launch party (details inside), we're not just documenting this culture—we're growing with it.

This spring issue stretches beyond our usual territories. We're expanding our psychedelics coverage with an in-depth look at psilocybin therapy—because watching the medical establishment embrace compounds that once defined counterculture may be even more fascinating than cannabis going mainstream. By 2027, your doctor might prescribe mushrooms with a straight face.

We also explore at-home ketamine therapy, where people experience profound mental health breakthroughs in their living rooms. Once relegated to warehouse parties, ketamine now helps people process trauma from their own couches.

For NYC readers, MJB Fresh's "Blazing" column walks the High Line and offers insights on experiencing this elevated park without crowds. His suggestion to visit at closing time transforms the experience in ways I can neither confirm nor deny.

The human side of this industry continues to inspire. Our profile on Emmanuela Venus Isichei traces her journey from the legacy market to becoming a cannabis career coach focused on workforce development and restorative justice—a reminder that behind every product are real people building real futures.

We're now in every legal NYC dispensary, expanding into Long Island, infiltrating concert venues and summer festivals, and building a street team. Our digital presence has evolved with an overhauled website, and a weekly digital newsletter that we blast on Thursdays—when you're most likely planning your weekend.

From MFNY's operation to THE PLUG comic strip, from psychedelics coverage to Veronica Castillo's exploration of cannabis advocacy in minority communities, this issue bridges worlds in surprising ways. Don't miss our product reviews, Hawaii Mike's cannabis-infused recipe, three Canna-dates, and our Bud of the Valley contest winner.

While our roots remain in Hudson Valley soil, our branches now stretch from the Catskills to Canal Street. Whether you've been with us since issue one or are joining us now, welcome. Spring is here, possibilities are budding, and this magazine, like the culture it covers, is just getting started.

With elevated thoughts,

Peter Shafran
Publisher



The ther

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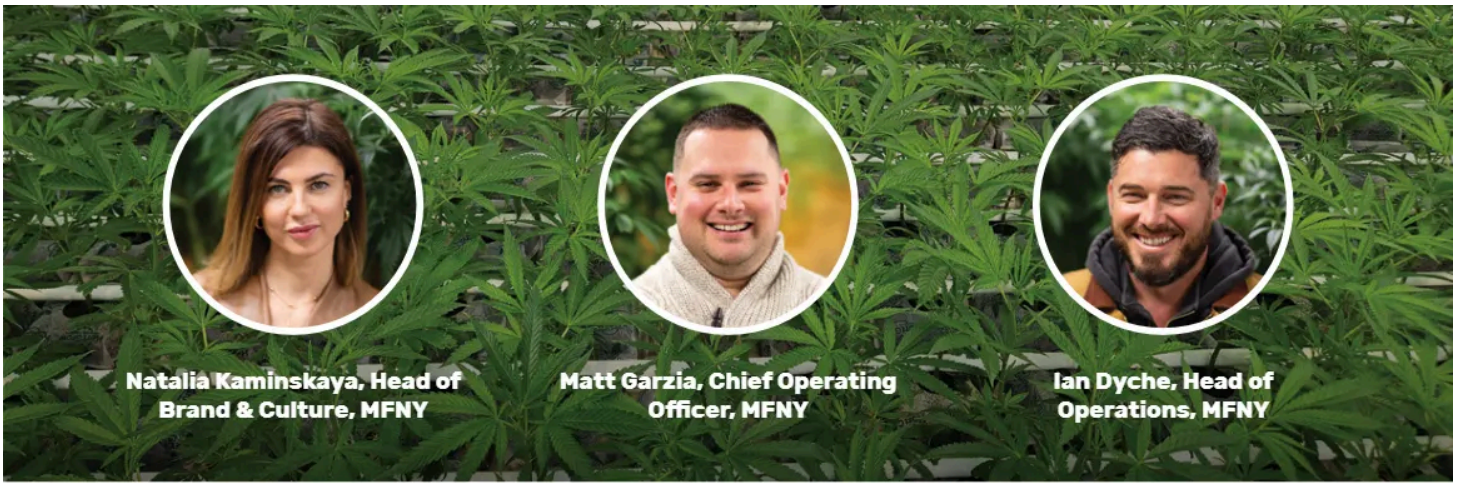


How MFNY is Setting New York's Cannabis Standard

**Cultivating Excellence in the Hudson
Valley's Cannabis Ecosystem**

In an industry flooded with out-of-state operators claiming New York authenticity, MFNY stands as the genuine article—a testament to what happens when New York grit meets horticultural expertise.

by Peter Shafran



Standing inside MFNY's immaculate greenhouse in New Windsor, watching Ian Dyche examine a thriving cannabis plant, the company's "true to plant" philosophy becomes tangibly real. The vibrant leaves and pungent aroma suggest something special is happening at this Hudson Valley cultivation facility.

"We wanted to produce something that we would consume and be happy to experience," explains Natalia Kaminskaya, co-founder and Head of Brand & Culture. "Our bodies contain locks and the compounds in cannabis contain keys to those locks, therefore the effects of different strains are always unique."

Hospitality Roots

Kaminskaya's journey to cannabis began in luxury hospitality at Starwood Hotels before transitioning to real estate with Corcoran. Meanwhile, her husband and co-founder Michael discovered cannabis cultivation through a California friend's operation.

When hemp was legalized, the couple established Hemp Farms of New York, focusing initially on CBD products before expanding into the broader cannabis market.

"The brand is not just a package or logo," Kaminskaya explains. "It's what constitutes that brand—the culture, the shared values, the shared philosophies. It's a brand for New Yorkers, by New Yorkers."

Single-Source Excellence

MFNY controls every aspect of production, rotating through more than 100 strains with 10-16 in major production at any given time. Their vertical integration preserves consistency and quality throughout the supply chain.

"The way we grow is for the products we make... it's not the easiest path as a producer," Dyche notes.

This commitment extends to their extraction process, which preserves the plant's full spectrum of cannabinoids and terpenes rather than isolating THC. The results are products that deliver what Matthew Garzia, Chief Operating Officer, calls "a true expression of what the plant is."



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MFNY



Hudson Valley Terroir

"The Hudson Valley has a rich agricultural history," notes Dyche. "Bright sun, moderate temperatures, especially during fall and spring. I think being close to the Hudson River does something to the air—ionizes it because of the large body of water."

MFNY's 35.8-acre facility utilizes a deep bedrock well system, avoiding strain on municipal resources. Their plants grow in coco medium rather than peat moss—a sustainable choice that gives them precise control over nutrition.

"I treat these plants like they're living at the Olympic Training Center."

"I treat these plants like they're living at the Olympic Training Center," Dyche explains. "The way they get fed is precise... so the plant's metabolism and vigor never hit a blip and it can fully express itself."

Their pest management approach eschews chemical pesticides in favor of predatory insects, with staff collecting and releasing praying mantises throughout the cultivation areas.

Award-Winning Results

MFNY's meticulous approach has garnered multiple industry awards, particularly for its live rosin, one of the most challenging cannabis products to produce at scale.

"We don't have different tiers of quality with our oil," Dyche notes. "It's all processed the same way from the same material. There's no lesser quality oil in the gummies—it's the same that's in the badder."

This quality-first approach appeals to both connoisseurs and newcomers. "You don't need to understand the nuance to recognize the taste and flavor," Dyche explains. "Many commercially available oil products are simply monetized cannabinoids concentrated into forms that eliminate the full spectrum effect."





Authentically New York

"We consider ourselves real New Yorkers," says Kaminskaya. "It's a very special city of passionate, relentless, ambitious, wild and spiritual people, and that's what we love about it." This spirit influences everything from product development to community engagement, including participating in New Museum exhibitions and New York Fashion Week.

The company name itself embodies this attitude. While MFNY officially stands for "Marijuana Farms New York," the team embraces customers' more colorful interpretation. "With the *MF*, people started saying, 'that's what New York is,' and we embrace that," Kaminskaya notes.

Education and Growth

MFNY hosts regular budtender education tours, pausing operations to guide retail staff through their process. Unlike many cannabis companies, MFNY maintains a dedicated education team separate from sales. "My point is for them to know the product, the extraction, the quality, to understand the philosophy, what we stand behind," Kaminskaya emphasizes.

Looking ahead, MFNY has ambitious plans to expand its product line while maintaining quality standards. "Between full-time staff, part-time employees, and seasonal workers, it takes about 72 people to make the engine run," Garzia notes. "My goal is to have that number closer to 240."



The Personal Touch

The team's connection with their products stands out. Kaminskaya favors **The Belafonte Live Resin vape cart** and the **Hash Burger Live Rosin Tincture**, which she pairs with food "like you are tasting the flower itself."

Garzia, an amateur guitarist, reaches for **Grape Guava Live Resin vape**. "What it does to my thought process, the fluidity in my fingers, and how I visualize music is truly unique," he shares.

Dyche samples everything MFNY creates, like the owner of Sam Adams, who keeps a beer from every batch. "I love our badder—it's the heart of what we do here."

As MFNY helps shape New York's cannabis industry, Kaminskaya concludes, "We need to champion this because it's not going anywhere." With MFNY leading the way, New York's cannabis future looks impressively bright. 🌿

HIGH SOCIETY & SCENE

Work N Roll

Budtender XP: Valentine's Edition

The cannabis industry's finest gathered at the Carriage House NYC for a Valentine's experience, blending brand activations, chocolate tastings, and tarot readings—proving love takes many forms in NYC's cannabis scene.



Pinks

Canna-Couture Launch

During NYFW, Pinks turned the iconic Limelight into a cannabis couture playground, debuting its 2025 collection with runway flair, cocktails, and high-fashion vibes—proving cannabis can be pure glamour.



Hudson Valley Cannabis

Winter Roll Call

Hudson Valley's cannabis community came together in Lake Katrine for their 3rd annual event, featuring a powerful "Women in Cannabis" panel led by Tamika Dunkley. Industry leaders shared insights on entrepreneurship and growth.



REPAIRING THE DAMAGE

CANNABIS ADVOCACY IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

by Veronica "Vee" Castillo

Cannabis has a rich historical connection to indigenous communities worldwide. Archaeological evidence suggests cannabis was used medicinally by Native Americans as far back as 500 BCE, with tribes like the Lakota using it for pain relief and spiritual ceremonies. Hemp cultivation was not only legal, but also encouraged in early America with farmers including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. They grew it as a staple crop for rope, paper, and textiles until the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act effectively criminalized it.

Cannabis wasn't foreign to these lands, it grew naturally across continents. In India, cannabis use dates back to 2000 BCE, where it was documented in sacred texts like the Atharva Veda for its medicinal properties. Similarly, across Africa in regions like Morocco and South Africa, cannabis cultivation has been practiced for centuries with the plant having cultural significance and medicinal applications predating colonial contact. These historical contexts reveal that this plant has played an integral role in human civilization long before the colonizers implemented prohibition.

The Criminalization Campaign

The War on Drugs, initiated under President Nixon in 1971, disproportionately targeted minority communities despite similar usage rates across racial demographics. According to the ACLU, Black Americans are 3.64 times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than white Americans, despite similar consumption rates. This disparity wasn't accidental; Nixon's domestic policy advisor, John Ehrlichman, later admitted, "We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or Blacks, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and Blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities." These policies resulted in mass incarceration, while economic impacts of these arrests have devastated minority communities for generations by creating cycles of poverty and limited opportunity that persist today.

Take Action Today

Hemp is now federally legal, thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill, and **over 38 states have legalized cannabis for medical use while 24 states permit adult recreational use**, but the fight for justice continues. Visit these organizations' websites today to learn how you can support their crucial work through donations, volunteering, or simply amplifying their messages within your community. As legalization expands, ensuring equitable participation for those most harmed by prohibition remains essential for true cannabis justice.

Organizations Fighting for Justice

The **Minority Cannabis Business Association (MCBA)** stands at the forefront of addressing these injustices. MCBA's mission is to create equal access for cannabis businesses and economically empower communities of color through policy, programming and outreach initiatives to achieve equity for the communities most impacted by the War on Drugs. Their priorities center on a grassroots approach designed to uplift local efforts creating equity through advocacy and entrepreneurship. These initiatives include a workshop tour featuring 30+ nationwide events, an equity flagship event, Lobby Days in Washington DC, and ongoing engagement through Town Halls and weekly Power Hours.

The **JUSTÜS Foundation** is an approved 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring and facilitating the entry of legacy (pre-legalization) cannabis operators to the legal cannabis market. The organization addresses two critical trends: the exclusion of legacy cannabis operators from the legal industry and the persistence of a dual market following legalization. The foundation's program includes several pillars: outreach to identify and contact legacy operators, needs assessment to identify barriers to entry, policy development to remove

regulatory barriers, public education to build awareness, and constituent services. In New York, these services include support for forming UNLOC (a legacy operators association), media training, application assistance, mentoring, networking events, and facilitating relationships between legacy and legal businesses.

The **Indigenous Cannabis Industry Association (ICIA)** is a dedicated resource for empowerment and growth in the cannabis market for Indigenous groups, particularly through advocacy work in the ever-changing landscape of cannabis legalization across the country. Their work centers around three core pillars. Policy: building an equitable and sustainable Indigenous cannabis industry through sensible policy. Empowerment: providing education, resources, and economic opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs, Tribal Nations, and communities. Connection: offering access to ICIA's network to connect Tribal Nations, industry partners, advocacy groups, mentors, businesses, and aspiring entrepreneurs. ICIA recognizes the sacred relationship many indigenous communities have with cannabis and works to preserve tribal sovereignty in the emerging cannabis economy while ensuring economic benefits flow back to tribal communities.

Blazing the



They Don't Call It "High" Line for Nuthin'!

by MJB Fresh

Phans and phriends of the MJBFresh penned "Blazing" column in this phine weed rag are no doubt sitting anxiously. At the edge of their "Phish-at-Maya-Riviera" cove-side chaise lounges, they await my phollow up to "Vinyl Nights" as seen in Issue #2 of The Other. The wait is over! Mind sufficiently blown wide-open by the TBT (throwback Thursday, boomers) pop-up disco afforded by "Vinyl Nights," it's after 9 PM and the Hudson sparkles and shimmers as the sun fades over Hoboken. We bust out a fresh pre-roll! Psyched!

Sailboats, tugs and barges, late-day SkiDoo's, and varied party tour vessels freckle the bold western river. Horns and motors, DJs and howls fill the heavy July night sky. The Highline is closing and we got in just before the rope went up! It's another Moses miracle... there is no one up there except us for as far as we can see!

For those unfamiliar, the Highline is an urban recreational marvel, an elevated "green" way oasis that bisects the far west border of Chelsea's hipster-paradise from 31st Street down to Gansevoort. Once used heavily as a mid-20th century transportation route for horses, cars, trucks and trains, later standing dormant and overgrown with urban weeds for decades. Lord knows who lived up there, died up there, conceived up there, did dastardly late-night shenanigans up there. If I was a 14-year-old from midtown, I'd be all over that shiz, bong in my right hand, quart of Miller (*High Life!*) in my left! Boombox over my left shoulder, party on the Highline!

Creative financing, design, aggressive intent, nonprofit grants and budgeting enabled a world-class internationally-landscaped nirvana to emerge. The Highline super-steroid charged the Chelsea real estate and art gallery scene. Every architect from Burundi to Hong Kong wanted a piece of the action: to design and retrofit an aging factory building or five-story walk-up into



a glowing Highline-adjacent spectacle. Each new building has huge voyeur-friendly windows and terraces that hang arm's length from the madding tourists streaming by. Rich folks' entire lives are purposely peacock'd for perusal by eager camera-laden visitors from every corner of the globe. It's Disney, elevated.

Internationally acclaimed sculptors, mixed-media artists and videographers compete for high-profile Highline curation. And the icing on the Highline cake? The landscaping, of course, culled from any and every viable global source. Each season presents a different aesthetic, a nuanced shadow and a seasonal pastel. The sound of the Hudson winds meeting the autumn leaves and brush is indeed special. Creatively hidden benches, perches and mini theaters provide a very private immersion with the gentrified glossy 'hood. It feels kinda creepy, looking right into folks' lives with their absolute permission!

With labyrinthian stepped entrances and elevators every four or five blocks, access is ample. But, beware! Peak hours and fine weather visits become a bit of a shitshow. That's an understatement—the Highline can suck, bad, getting wedged between a slow-crawling French family of six or bride and groom doing one of those millennial pre-nup photo shoots like they own this planet! C'mon, GTFO! the way! Worst of all are the workout 30-something fitness hamsters from Chelsea who try to briskly jog past a horde of Dorito-munching lowans who just got off the tour bus. Go run someplace else! You're in Disney. Go away with those yoga pants and step-counting apps.

This is exactly why blazing the Highline at closing time is a fine thing—any season, any weather, any direction! The Highline ain't no secret, but good stoners are secret seekers and often find what we're looking for with a bit of cosmic luck. 🌿



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Retail Profile

Bright Lights, Higher Vibes

Interview with George Vlamis, Co-owner of QUBE Times Square

by Ranch Guerra

In the shadow of Times Square's flashing billboards, a new kind of storefront is turning heads—and it smells a little different. Qube Dispensary, on the corner of 39th and Broadway, is open seven days a week until 2 a.m., offering legal cannabis in the heart of Midtown. Eighths, gummies, pre-rolls—no backrooms, no guessing games.

Inside, bold color blocks, a sky-blue floor, and two red lounge chairs set the vibe. It's sleek, loud, and unmistakably New York. Founded by George Vlamis and Quine Liddell, Qube isn't just selling weed—they're redefining what a dispensary looks like in a city that's always on. I caught up with George to hear how Qube came to life and why Times Square was always the target.

The Wu-Tang Clan famously said "Cash Rules Everything Around Me" while growing up in NYC. Your TSQ dispensary QUBE has a similar ring to it. Was that intentional, and how do you see your brand connecting with New York's rich cultural history?

The name QUBE was born while thinking about what connected us to the best cannabis NYC had to offer. Once upon a time, a delivery service, called CARTOON NETWORK, sold the best weed money can buy inside plastic rectangles of all different colors, which we referred to as cubes. We changed the C to a Q for SEO purposes, but the name stems from a part of NYC legacy cannabis history.

You made a significant pivot from running restaurants for 22 years to cannabis entrepreneurship. What specific skills transferred most seamlessly from hospitality to running a dispensary in TSQ?

Restaurants prepared Quain and I for everything, from customer service skills to operating POS systems (and all things in between that a fast paced environment demands). Especially: long hours, late nights, and building efficient operational procedures and developing a happy and unified staff.

What inspired you to open QUBE in such a high-profile location as Times Square, and what unique challenges come with operating there versus other neighborhoods?

Once we laid eyes on this location, the search was over. We knew in our hearts that the corner of 39th and Broadway was going to be something special. Launching QUBE needed to be done in NYC, where the world could see us come alive. The only issue we've had is battling the thousands of illegal shops that operate with no license, pay no taxes, and have escaped the wrath of tax code 280E.

I notice QUBE is open until 2am. How has the late-night cannabis consumer in NYC surprised you, and what have you learned about the rhythm of the city through this extended schedule? These folks often need to relax or want help to sleep.

Coming from a 24/7 diner operation, we wanted to offer our products to late-night customers in need of such products. We are open the max hours the state allows, and we'll move to 24/7 when approved. NYC has waves for early morning travelers, lunch breaks, and when offices start to clear out for the day. Our location is unique and offers constant tourists pouring in from TSQ, so we are never really sitting idle for long.

Your dispensary features products from numerous brands. What's your philosophy on product curation, and how do you decide which products earn a place on your shelves?

Quality, relationships, and proper education to our staff and buyer is how we select our menu offerings. Because NYC has such a diverse range of people, we carry almost 1,000 products to ensure we can appeal to the masses searching for safe, quality products.

In a previous interview, you mentioned relocating to MA in 2016 to learn about legal cannabis firsthand. What was the most valuable lesson you learned there that's now helping QUBE succeed?

Megan Sanders and Eric Williams, from Canna Provisions in Massachusetts, gave me and a partner an in-depth tour of their entire operations, introduced us to tax code 280E, and shared valuable insight about operating within legal boundaries. Coincidentally, they introduced me to my business partner for QUBE, Quine Liddell—and the rest is history.

How do you balance serving both tourists visiting Times Square and local New Yorkers who might become regular customers?

Having 6-8 POS stations available, we are able to service customers very fast and efficiently. So locals are able to maintain their fast paced day, while tourists can take their time to explore what the legal market has to offer.

With your background in hospitality, how have you approached training your staff to deliver exceptional customer service in this new industry?

Well, the brands ensure all staff members have the knowledge they need to answer consumer questions, and they definitely get their fair share of samples to ensure they are speaking from experience.

What's been the most unexpected aspect of operating a legal cannabis business in NYC so far?

Just the battle of the illegal smoke shops. Everything else has been a pleasure and pure gift from the universe.

As more dispensaries open across NYC, what makes QUBE stand out from the competition?

Our sleek design, amazingly knowledgeable staff, the best menu in legal cannabis, and our convenient location in Midtown allows us to shine above our competition.



George Viamis and Quine Liddell

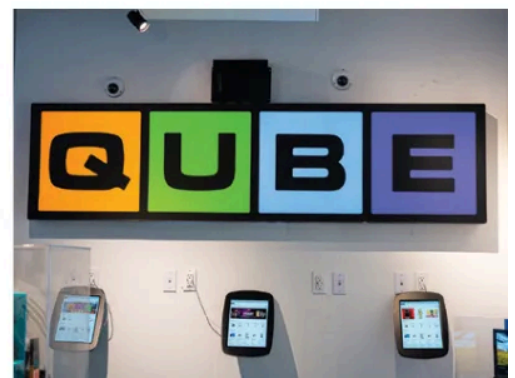


From Broadway theaters to tourist attractions, Times Square has a uniquely diverse ecosystem. How has QUBE integrated into this iconic New York neighborhood?

By creating a fast-paced modern retail environment for cannabis. Our staff is dedicated to creating a warm, family-like atmosphere where exceptional service comes naturally. Qube has integrated their passion for the plant into the heart of New York.

What is, currently, your personal favorite product that you carry at QUBE, and why would you recommend it to our readers?

I have too many relationships to single out companies or specific brands. But, to be fair to the person who helped me enter this market when I was on the supply side, MILKWEED is currently the best flower in the state. Period. It's available at QUBE in Manhattan and Farmers Choice Dispensary in Fishkill. www.milkweed.life 🌿





THE HIGH-LITE EMMANUELA VENUS ISICHEI

by Annette Fernandez and Kassia Graham

The High-Lite is a series created by the High Exposure Agency to shine a light on the advocates, founders, farmers, legislators, dispensary owners, processors (and more) who are building the New York cannabis market.



Meet Emmanuela Venus Isichei, a cannabis career coach for the Borough of Manhattan Community College's Cannabis Workforce and Business Development Program. Venus, as she is commonly known, spent several years in the legacy market and brings that expertise to the legal side of cannabis.

Many business owners and executives are learning as they go, which leaves them vulnerable to financial, legal, and operational challenges later down the road. The work can be overwhelming, and having spaces for advocates and professionals to recharge is just as important as the work itself. These gaps inspired me to create my own company, Hi-Impact, which focuses on filling workforce and training gaps with restorative justice practices in the center.

It helps me to keep in mind, "You cannot catch all the droplets of rain," and that "seeing the forest among the trees" is necessary for real progress. We should not just *want* to collaborate with one another. We *must* – and there is room for all of us. There is no industry cannabis does not touch. The only sustainable way forward is through shared knowledge, collective action and a commitment to uplifting those historically excluded from the industry.

What called you to cannabis?

A childhood friend introduced me to an underground cannabis delivery company. I later became Chief Human Resource Officer, seeing how a larger-scale legacy operation functioned with over 40 employees. That experience showed me the challenges legacy operators face when transitioning to the legal market.

What's one question you wished people asked about what you do? And what is your response? What does it really take to do this work?

It takes more than passion. New York's cannabis market is evolving, and even institutions like BMCC's Center for Continuing Education are adapting as they integrate over 30 years of workforce development expertise through the Cannabis Workforce and Business Development Program. This program offers no-cost to low-cost cannabis training, as stipulated by the Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) law, to provide incubators for aspiring professionals. So far, we have enrolled over 100 students, with our next cohort in April 2025. It has been remarkable considering how intense the industry can be.

What is your message to New York's consumers when it comes to cannabis?

Cannabis is a wellness enhancer, and consumers should feel empowered to make informed choices. Despite market challenges, purchasing regulated products ensures safer and more reliable cannabis. It strengthens small businesses and guarantees reinvestment into our communities as outlined by the MRTA.

What is your favorite strain?

Purple Hindu Kush: A heavy indica with earthy spice and floral sweetness that helps me unwind after a long day.

What is your favorite form of consumption?

Live rosin vapes like *Bloom* and tinctures for controlled dosing, but a nicely packed joint always hits right. And when I am feeling nostalgic, a nice wrapped blunt.

COLLEGES OFFERING Free Cannabis Courses and Resources

New York's cannabis industry is just getting its bearings and there are various ways to get a foot in the door. Thankfully, some colleges and universities offer free courses and resources for those who'd like to explore what the industry has to offer before they take the leap.

Borough of Manhattan Community College



BMCC's Cannabis Workforce and Business Development Program lowers the barrier for entry into the cannabis industry for those seeking a career in security solutions, retail management, or manufacturing. Guest speakers include cannabis industry experts. Upon satisfactory completion of the coursework, graduates are invited to attend a job fair.

Columbia-Greene Community College



Columbia-Greene Community College is able to offer cannabis education students financial assistance—including partial and full scholarships—via a SUNY Workforce Initiative grant. Interested parties can learn more about the program and requirements [here](#).

Cornell University ILR and WDI



The Cornell University's Cannabis Workforce Initiative offers a free virtual 15-hour Cannabis Career Exploration and Worker Rights certificate program and job board. The program covers topics including an overview of legalization, basic cannabis science, jobs on the plant-touching and ancillary sides of the industry, compliance, workers rights and more.

Lehman College, CUNY on the Concourse



Lehman College's School of Continuing and Professional Studies supports new cannabis entrepreneurs in the legal market, in NYC, via the Cannabis Workforce and Business Development Program. The program includes foundational business advising, a shared workspace, focused networking, plus access to free information sessions.

The source for all things cannabis

New York Cannabis Product Reviews

by Veronica "Vee" Castillo

As spring blossoms throughout New York State, so does its flourishing cannabis industry. The Empire State's adult-use market features thousands of unique cannabis products across approximately 300+ active dispensaries (with new locations opening weekly). This variety offers consumers an unprecedented selection, from artisanal flower cultivated in the Hudson Valley to precisely formulated edibles crafted in Brooklyn's manufacturing facilities. Like the renewal that spring brings to nature, New York's cannabis market is experiencing its own renaissance of growth and innovation. In this issue, we explore three cannabis products from New York's expanding marketplace.



1



1

Brand: Grass Roots

Product: Small Bud, Indoor, Indica Princess, 3.5 G

Rating: ★★★★★

Pretty flower, small buds, extremely aromatic with limonene and myrcene coming in as the dominant terpenes, and tested at 28% THC. This is a lovely strain with a "cloud 30" kind of elevation. I consumed my first blunt of Indica Princess in the morning, and it gave me a really beautiful morning high. Though an indica dominant strain, I was ready to get to work – and did. I got writing and reading done when neither of those things were on my to-do list that morning. I celebrated with a follow up sesh that had me singing "Sweet Lady" out loud, followed by cooking and baking. Indica Princess made life a stage where I performed.

2

Brand: VitaBudz**Product:** Fast Acting, Live Resin, Vegan "Hype" Gummies**Rating:** ★★★★★

It's been a while since I've had an edible experience that could turn into a *this edible isn't working—then all of a sudden—BAM!* meme. I started to think there would be no impact so I started smoking my blunt. Somewhere between the 4th and 6th inhale my high started to go up, and when it reached the top, it felt like it did 0 to 100 in a second. My high landed on "cloud 13" where it was a breezy sunny 70 degree day in early spring. The high made the cloud feel like the vibration that comes from one of those pedicure chairs. I laid back down and had a slow Sunday morning. I loved it! The 10MG sour watermelon vegan gummy had a solid texture (though I recommend keeping it in the refrigerator).

Tip: It's important to know your tolerance and consume accordingly. I don't usually have an edible first thing in the morning, so I planned for Sunday to be a lazy day just in case and am glad I did. Even though I consumed the "Hype" gummy, my experience was more relaxed than I expected.

3

Brand: Dime Vape**Product:** Mango Diesel, 1 G**Rating:** ★★★★★

I love a good sativa! This pretty, gold Mango Diesel concentrate in a yellow and gold cartridge was a good one. I'll admit that I didn't taste the mango, but definitely felt the diesel on first inhale. By the 5th inhale over a 10 minute period, I was reminded of reasons I love a good diesel. My creativity met my calm and it was the perfect way to start my day full of video calls. The morning was pretty great and so I kept inhaling into lunch and everything just flowed with my shoulders very relaxed, plus a smile that wouldn't leave my face.

Tip: Beginners/lower tolerance, start at 1-2 inhales and give it 5-10 minutes before consuming more. As a high tolerance consumer, it took 5 inhales and I was set up beautifully, so lower tolerance may need less.

2



3



HIGH PRAISE

by Rachel Wallach



Flower Mill Premium Grinder: A Better Grinding Experience



The Flower Mill Premium Grinder offers a remarkable shift in the grinding experience. Unlike traditional grinders, it features a toothless design and offers various fine-to-coarse milling plates, allowing you to achieve your desired consistency for ground flower. This innovative technology ensures your flower comes out airy and fluffy. Available in a range of beautiful colors, these next-level grinders are a must-have for cannabis connoisseurs who appreciate the option of different milling plates. While the additional grip accessories felt a bit bulky, they could be beneficial for those seeking a more secure hold.

What truly sets the Flower Mill apart is its ability to grind flower without crushing the trichomes. Trichomes, the tiny "hairs" on cannabis leaves, are where cannabinoids like THC, CBD, and CBG are stored. They also contain terpenes, which are

responsible for the distinct aromas of cannabis, such as gassy or fruity scents. By preserving the trichomes, the Flower Mill helps maintain the flower's unique smell, taste, and even its potency. This is a significant improvement over traditional pronged grinders that crush the flower.

The preservation of trichomes directly translates to a better experience for the user, allowing them to fully enjoy the flower's aroma, flavor, and potency. Compared to conventional grinders, the Flower Mill's technology is superior. I believe these grinders would be a fantastic addition for any flower enthusiasts, benefiting both seasoned cannabis users and newcomers alike. While the solid color options are appealing, I would love to see more design variations; however, with a reasonable price point, the Flower Mill is still an affordable and highly recommended product.

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Model: Nina Wentt

Brooklyn-based artist Jarid Blue transforms bodies and spaces through his signature "Light Baths"—immersive experiences using projected light and custom designs. Through precisely choreographed patterns, he creates an armor of artwork that empowers participants to express themselves in ways they never imagined possible.

Models: Emma Campher, Andrew Hutner

Each session becomes a collaborative exploration, where subjects discover new dimensions beneath layers of light. Blue exhibits his work throughout the United States, including at Sotheby's Institute of Art and The Other Art Fair, while his projection installations transform venues for performances and events across the country.

Book your own Light Bath:

@kingmallard
jaridblue.com



Spring Cleaning for the Soul

Energetic Detox Practices

A guide to clearing stagnant energy through sound, visualization, and decluttering rituals.

by Asa Angel



Spring cleaning rituals date back over 3,000 years. Our ancestors understood how to work with the cycles of nature, reaping both physical and spiritual benefits. Even today, farmers plant seeds by the new and full moons, knowing that crops thrive when aligned with these natural rhythms. Likewise, spiritual practitioners time their rituals with the moon's phases to amplify their intentions.

When the wheel of the year turns to spring, we are reminded of rebirth and renewal. It's the first time in months that we can open the windows and let fresh air flow, clearing out the stagnant energy of winter.

Most people think of spring cleaning as just a physical task, but there's an energetic aspect to it as well. A clean, uncluttered space allows energy to flow freely, creating mental clarity, emotional balance and a sense of renewal.

1

SET YOUR INTENTIONS

Take a deep breath and say:
As I cleanse this space, I release what no longer serves me. May fresh energy flow, bringing harmony and renewal.

2

OPEN THE WINDOW AND SWEEP OUT OLD ENERGY

Let fresh air move through your space. Then, grab a besom (ritual broom) or a regular broom and sweep from the back of your home toward the front door, imagining negativity leaving with the dust.

3

CLEANSE WITH HERBAL WASH AND ESSENTIAL OILS

Mix a simple cleansing solution with:

Water (Moon water if available)
Vinegar (purification and protection)
Essential Oils:
Lemon (clarity), Lavender (peace),
Rosemary (cleansing)
Salt (grounding and protection)

Wipe down doorways, windows, mirrors, and surfaces while repeating:
Only love remains, all else is washed away.

4

SMOKE OR SOUND CLEANSING

Clear out lingering energy with:

Smoke cleansing: Use locally sourced sustainable plants like juniper, cedar, or pine.

Sound cleansing: Ring bells, use a singing bowl, or clap in the corners where energy tends to collect.

5

CHARGE YOUR HOME WITH FRESH ENERGY

Invite renewal and protection by placing a bowl of spring water with fresh flowers or citrus in your home.

Setting crystals like Amethyst (peace), Citrine (abundance), or Black Tourmaline (protection) in key areas.

Sprinkling salt near thresholds for added protection.

6

BLESS YOUR HOME AND WELCOME SPRING

Stand in the center of your space and declare:

My home is cleansed, my spirit is renewed. I welcome joy, love, and abundance into this space.

With this intentional spring cleaning ritual, you're not just tidying up. You are creating a space that nourishes your highest self. Take a moment to breathe in the energy of renewal, trust the process, and embrace the clarity and balance that comes with a home that's in harmony with the season—both physically and energetically.

References:
Spring cleaning ritual timeline: Ahmad Tafazzoli, "Encyclopedia Iranica"
Nowruz: Columbia University
Magical spring cleansing: Judith Iles, "The Element Encyclopedia of Witchcraft"
Ari Murphy-Hiscock, "The House Witch: Your Complete Guide to Creating a Magical Space with Rituals and Spells"

COOKING WITH CANNABIS

by **Hawaii Mike Salman**: Co-Founder of Chef for Higher

Spaghetti Aglio e Olio

Spaghetti with Garlic & Oil is native to Southern Italy, specifically Naples. I chose this recipe because it requires only a few ingredients that most people already have in their homes. It's quick to prepare and straightforward to execute. What I appreciate about this dish is that, with proper attention to not burning the garlic, it elevates the home cook to professional status. It's versatile and light enough for various occasions—perfect for an intimate dinner or evening indulgence.

4–6 SERVINGS
(10mg Cannabis per serving)

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. spaghetti
1/2 cup high-quality olive oil
4 tps Cannabis-infused EV00 (40 mg THC total)
6 to 8 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes (adjust to taste)
Garnishes: chopped fresh parsley, freshly-grated Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Bring a large stockpot of heavily salted water ("like the sea") to a boil. Add spaghetti and cook 1 minute less than al dente according to package directions.
2. About 5 minutes after adding the pasta to the boiling water, heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the sliced garlic and crushed red pepper flakes sautéing for 3 to 5 minutes, or until it is lightly golden. (Note: It's crucial that the garlic does not burn. If the pasta isn't ready to go by the time the garlic is lightly golden, remove the pan from the heat until the pasta is ready.)
3. Once the pasta is ready, use tongs to transfer it to the sauté pan, along with 1/2 cup of the hot starchy pasta water. Toss continuously until evenly coated in the garlic sauce.
4. Add parsley and mix thoroughly. If the sauce is dry, add another 1/4 cup of the starchy pasta water.
5. Taste and adjust as needed, adding more salt and/or crushed red pepper flakes if desired.
6. Serve immediately, garnished with freshly-grated Parmesan cheese and cracked black pepper.

Hawaii Mike Salman is the CEO and co-founder of Chef for Higher, a culinary company specializing in Cannabis-infused products and dining experiences. Known for his innovative approach, he blends traditional culinary training with Cannabis expertise to create precisely dosed, restaurant-quality cuisine. Through Chef for Higher, he aims to reshape perceptions of Cannabis by prioritizing education, consistency, and culinary excellence.



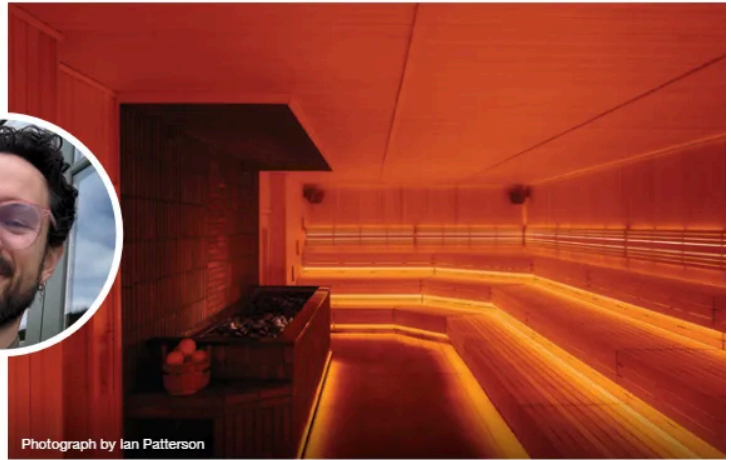
RANCH'S PICKS

Self-Care Spots on the Radar

by Ranch Guerra



Photograph by Alisha Wetherill



Photograph by Ian Patterson

Lil' Chop

98 S 4th St Suite C, Brooklyn
Open Tuesday-Sunday

lilchopair

Living in Brooklyn, I have a multitude of options for local salons to pick from to get a slick cut. The one where I continue to find the chop of my dreams, though, is Lil' Chop in South Williamsburg.

When you cross the threshold into the salon, it's impossible to deny the meticulous focus that the owner, Martha Ellen Mabry (alongside designer Rahul Ghera @diali.nyc) placed on its design and layout. The 3,000-square-foot space, featuring an open floor plan and skylight, is vivid and artistic. Custom paintings by @replicart line the wall behind the mid-century modern brown leather chairs, all of which are laid out to face inward, versus against the walls.

Headchop, the name of the salon element of Lil' Chop, is where I first experienced what's known as the "dry cutting" technique. Blessed (cursed?) with both curly and wavy, wild hair, the dry cut allows Martha Ellen and her team to exhibit more control and customization when I'm in the chair. I went in for the full "Chop N' Squeeze" experience twice over the last six months and was beyond satisfied and comfortable. The finished product is the type of cut that keeps the hair compliments coming, even after it grows out more and more.

Lil' Chop is also the name for the creative agency aspect of the space, which is rented as a facility (including a private suite) for creative productions, film and photography. It welcomes the community to host an assortment of gatherings from engagement parties to artisan showcases to brand activations.

Between the attentive hospitality of the staff, all the relaxing points of ambiance, and the surprise visits from Martha Ellen's mini Bernedoodle puppy "Louis," it's hard for me to leave this salon.

Othership

23 W 20th Street, New York City
Open Every Day

othership

Othership in Flatiron is a 21st century health club featuring a performance sauna, ice baths for up to 16 people, and a social tea lounge with bleacher-style seating around a full-height central fireplace. There are ice baths for two or four people set at multiple different levels of cold intensity, plummeting as low as 32°F—in case you're looking to practice emotional resilience and overcome that fight-or-flight response.

Co-founded in Toronto in 2022 by CEO Robbie Bent and four partners, Othership Flatiron is the third outpost, following two locations in Toronto. I'm eagerly anticipating the incoming Brooklyn location opening in one of my favorite stomping grounds, Kent Ave in Williamsburg, set to open in Fall 2025.

Canadian firm Futurestudio deserves an award for their design on the interiors, creating a flawless harmony throughout. The atmospheric lighting, along with the shape and placement of tile, brick, pebbled river stone flooring and backlit cedar panelling, leaves me feeling like I stepped into a beautiful scene from *Dune: Prophecy*.

Othership has set themselves apart from the other bathhouses that I have visited by placing heavy emphasis on group experiences that combine hot and cold sessions with immersive music, guided breathwork, aromatherapy, and group therapy-like opportunities for open sharing. I love reflecting on what feelings came up for me during one of the "up," "down," or "all around" guided sessions. There are also "free flow," "quieter free flow," and "evening social" options, the latter being a two hour sober-curious alternative to the night-club scene.

There is valuable service being provided at Othership, cultivating the betterment of the emotional wellness of New York City. It has quickly become a sanctuary for me in the thick of all the noise.

Canna-dates!

Adventures While High with Your Girl or Your Guy

by Rachel Port, Ranch Guerra, Alan Greenwald

Mercer Labs

An Immersive Psychedelic Dreamland

by Rachel Port

If you're at all familiar with *The Artist's Way*, Julia Cameron's best-selling self-help book on how to get in touch with your inner artist, you'll know that artist dates are a weekly requirement. I've attempted to do *The Artist's Way* a couple times. I was never able to write three pages a day, never finished all the weekly tasks, but the one thing I was able to implement consistently were the artist dates.

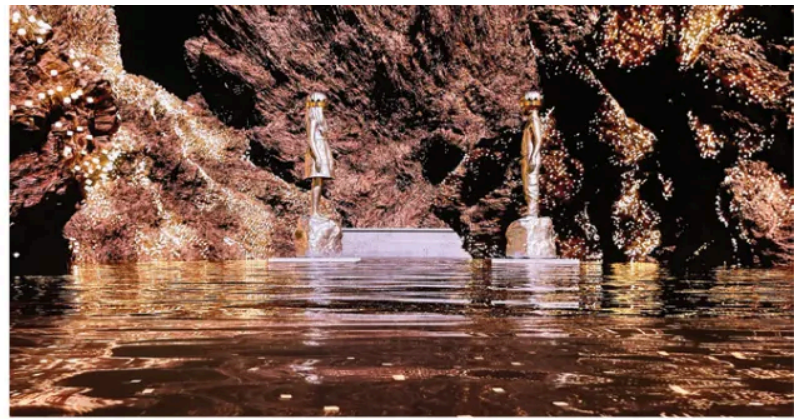
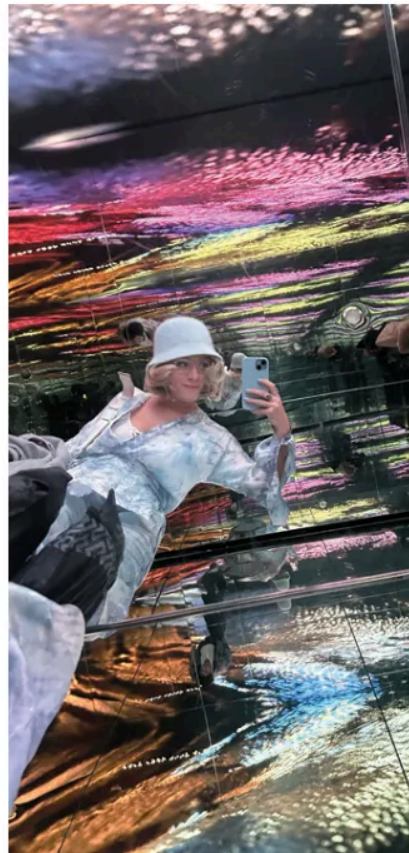
Artist dates, which are supposed to be a solo creativity-fueled activity, come easy to me. I've learned that I can live my life as if it were one giant artist date. Small things like going for a walk and taking pictures of flowers, interesting compositions, historical architecture, dogs... more dogs—it's a natural creative impulse to document the moment and save it forever. I also believe it's not completely necessary to be alone. When there's so much beauty available for free viewings all around New York City, I find it easy to skip indoor, ticketed spaces like museums and immersive art experiences, especially when they cost \$40 or more.

Mercer Labs, an experimental exhibition space in FiDi with 15 rooms of interactive experiences and immersive installations exploring the relationship between art and technology, however, was worth the \$52 ticket price.



32

Starting this column has been a great way to get myself to explore the more entrancing exhibits available in the city, and to pay more attention to what's cool (and what's not). For my Spring canna-date, I cycled through a few options: a new guy bailed due to a busy schedule, another wasn't into weed (not a dealbreaker for dating, just for canna-dating), and a third—an old college friend who was initially down—was sick. I finally asked one of my best girlfriends, a fellow art adventurer and great photographer, but she flaked at the last minute. So, with two hours notice, I called a close friend—an artist, brilliant mathematician, cannabis industry expert, and TED speaker—who once followed my absurdly specific Art Basel Miami itinerary without complaint. He was, clearly, the best choice all along.



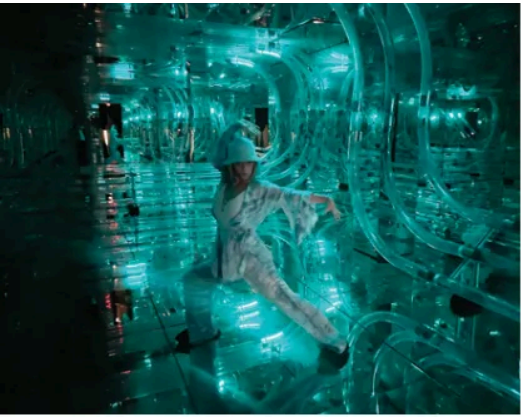
He stops by my place and gives me a very thoughtful belated birthday present: a Chappell Roan prayer candle and a lighter with a picture of her wearing a shirt that says "Eat Me." Millennial friends who share a love for Chappell Roan have a special place in my heart. I show him the three pre-roll options I have and we're on our way.



Waiting for the subway, I take out a **Super Lemon Haze vape**. It's a zesty, citrusy, energetic sativa. It's a great strain if you want to explore NYC, feel empowered, and keep your energy up. We take the L to the 4, and as soon as we emerge from the depths of the Fulton St. station, I light up my little **Binske Tangerine dogwalker pre-roll** with my new lighter. It's also an energizing sativa-dominant hybrid. It includes the terpenes Limonene, which gives Tangerine its citrus flavor, as well as Pinene, which has been shown to have anti-inflammatory effects. I finish it on the walk to Mercer Labs.

From what I had seen online, Mercer Labs Museum of Art and Technology seemed like a trippy immersive LED light show. I told my date to wear something light so the projected colors would show up well against our outfits. I decided to wear my new all-silk, light blue tie-dye, two-piece set and a baby blue angora wool bucket hat.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL PORT

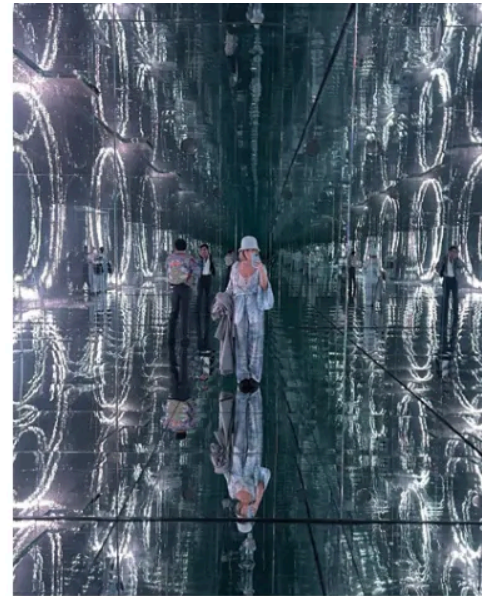


We are greeted by the nicest security boy I've ever met in my life. He compliments both of our outfits—no one else was wearing fun clothes. You can always tell the Burners from the rest of the crowd (sorry, not sorry). I take one more big hit of the Lemon Haze vape and I am officially blazed. I'm a total lightweight so this is already a silly, fun time. How perfect for getting in touch with my inner artist?

We walk into the entrance room where we have to put shoe covers on our feet so as not to dirty the space with our Manhattan soles. We look up and see this cool projection on the ceiling, a seemingly three-dimensional swirl of sharp blobs, look at each other, and as if we were thinking the same thoughts, we both blurt out, "we should've taken mushrooms."

The first official experience room is a big open space with four LED walls, swings in each corner, and a giant cuddle-puddle couch in the middle. At this point, I'm convinced more psychedelic substances should've been consumed. Symbols and characters appear throughout the whole experience, but I can't tell exactly what the message is at first. The next room features incredibly detailed paintings of blind people, first created by Roy Nachum, then painted over by the blind subjects themselves. The following rooms play with lighting, mirrors, and colors. One room reminds me of *The Matrix*. Another is filled with pink faux hydrangeas and monkeys dancing on screens. I am both confused and highly amused. There's an LED slide that lands in a ball pit, a room for playing life-size chess, a room to look at real oil paintings, and another wall-to-wall screen playing a continuation of the visual story from room one.

The whole experience is trippy AF, but my absolute favorite part is the drawing section, where you pick a coloring page of an animal, fill it in with crayons (which I probably haven't used since I was 10), scan your image, and then your animal HATCHES ON SCREEN AND STARTS HOPPING AROUND. It was like my childhood dreams came true. I chose a bunny, but I'd probably pick a dinosaur next time. I would go back just to experience this again. I also got to play with kinetic sand for the first time in my adult life... an exceptional tactile experience. This artist date got me in touch with not only my inner artist, but also my inner child—who is the same person, really.



Turns out, the whole point of the exhibit was to awaken the inner child. It worked!

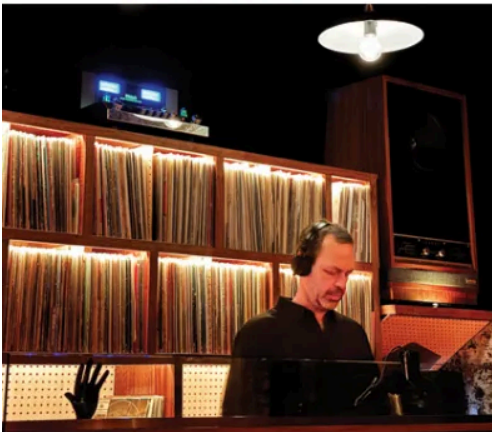
In the gift shop, we order passionfruit, lychee, and salted caramel mochi ice cream, and holy moly, they are so good—we go back for more. We also try the lychee soda drink, which is both delicious and aesthetically pleasing, as it comes in a clear plastic can with a metal soda top. Unfortunately that means you can't get the lychees out to eat them afterward, upsetting the sustainability gal (and the lychee lover) in me.

My Mercer Labs rating: 9.7/10. We spent a full 2.5 hours there, it was well worth the \$52, and I would definitely go back. If you're a drinker, they let you walk around with drinks from the bar.

We exit and go on a classic late-night NYC excursion to satiate our major munchies, and after a quick subway ride, we end up in Little Italy at Onieals, one of the bars/restaurants where an episode of *Sex and the City* was filmed. This was serendipitously hilarious since some of my people have started referring to me as the "Carrie Bradshaw of Weed." We'll see about that. My date and I end the night by critiquing my **Zizzle WAP pre-roll**, an indica-dominant hybrid, as we walk back to the subway. It was the perfect way to close our canna-date.

This exhibit, *Limitless*, by Roy Nachum is on view at Mercer Labs until mid-April. The following show, *Maestros and the Machines*, will be on view starting April 24. I'll be sure to try microdosing next time. 🌿

More Canna-dates!



Moondog HiFi

Williamsburg's Newest Vinyl Listening Bar

by Ranch Guerra

Since Moondog HiFi in East Williamsburg opened in November, I've gone on more dates there with my audiophile sweet-heart than anywhere else.

This vinyl listening bar is one of the best around. Most listening bars have much of the same elements: edison bulbs, bookshelves full of records, and some thriving house plants. Moondog is no different, but the sound system's positioning is set up just right, complimenting the high ceiling and comfy railroad layout.

The cornerstone of the bar is the prodigious speaker setup by Ex Machina Soundworks, a maker of high-end audio gear that is located across the street from Moondog. There is a mirror positioned high above the DJ booth, which allows patrons sitting further away to catch a glimpse of the work they are putting in behind the decks. I have been transported temporally and geographically by the records I've heard spun here: from jazz, funk, soul and disco to house, techno, breakbeat and Latin. Co-founder Elon Admony, who has his own collection of 2,500 records, knows how to pick his selectors.

Halfway through the date, I stepped out to the spacious side patio and burned down a ½ gram **"Puffinz" dogwalker pre-roll by House of Sacchi**. It was the last of a 7-pack that I have been enjoying, perfect to pair with one glass of chilled tempranillo. The bar's first spring/summer season is sure to be a lively one with outdoor speakers playing the DJ's tunes, although I would like to see a better system added out there at some point.

The med-mex small plates menu is bomb, developed by Moondog HiFi Co-Founder, Einat Admony, three-time James Beard winner and founder of the acclaimed Greenwich Village restaurant Balaboosta. I love the yucca fries with harissa aioli and the corn, feta, mozzarella empanadas.

If your Brooklyn date night is meant to exist within a stimulating audible vibe and a warm, yet dark, ambiance, Moondog HiFi is it. 🌿

Larchmont's Cinematic Shoreline

Westchester's Hidden Beach Gem

by Alan Greenwald

We started at Mamaroneck's shoreline, eager to put our toes in the cold water. Our initial plan was simple: find a beach, brave the March chill, dip our feet into the Sound. But each access point seemed blocked—winter's final grip holding firm against our adventurous intentions, empty parking lots and locked gates turning away our maritime dreams.

Driving along Larchmont's winding shoreline, we spotted the famous "Please Don't Eat the Daisies" house—a movie landmark that sparked nostalgic conversation. The landscape rolled past us, a patchwork of Victorian homes and glimpses of rocky coastline. The unlit **Super Boof One Gram Sativa pre-roll from Golden Garden** waited between us, a promise of eventual relaxation.

The car windows cracked just enough to let in the crisp March air, our conversation meandering like the shoreline road. Bare trees reached toward a steel-gray sky, occasional joggers and dog walkers passing like fleeting scenes in our personal film.

Glen Island Park became our unexpected destination. We found a bench facing the Long Island Sound, positioning ourselves to break the wind. The Super Boof's first draw brought an immediate warmth, its earthy aroma mixing with salt air and distant memories of other cold spring days.

A lone tree caught our attention—improbably growing from a rocky outcropping in the Sound, its roots somehow anchored to bare stone surrounded by water. We marveled at its resilience, speculating how such life could take hold in such an inhospitable place. The cannabis heightened our wonder, transforming the tree into a metaphor of stubborn survival, its branches defying the harsh maritime environment.

As the afternoon light began to fade and the cold crept deeper into our bones, we knew it was time to leave. We shared one last draw, gathered our things, and headed back to the warmth of the car. The memory of our unexpected adventure lingered like the last wisps of smoke. 🌿



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COSMIC VIBRATIONS AT THE SPHERE

Dead & Company's Visual Revolution

by Peter Shafran

There came a moment at my first Dead & Company show at The Sphere when I realized I was experiencing something that transcended a typical concert. This revelation struck during a classic jam when the dome transformed into a kaleidoscopic galaxy while Bob Weir's voice resonated through the venue's unparalleled sound system. While Las Vegas has long mastered sensory overload, Dead Forever at The Sphere transcends simple boundary-pushing—it reimagines the concert experience entirely.



Journey Through Time: From Englishtown to The Sphere

When I caught my first Grateful Dead show back in September 1977—the now-legendary Englishtown concert at Raceway Park—I couldn't have imagined that nearly five decades later, I'd be witnessing the Dead's musical legacy transformed by technology that would have seemed like science fiction back then.

As college sophomores, my friends and I drove from SUNY Binghamton to New Jersey in Michael's pride and joy—his 1975 silver Firebird Trans Am—abandoning the car on a quiet side street nearly a mile from Raceway Park after traffic congealed into a standstill. At 4:00 a.m., the distant roar of liberation reached us—the crowd had breached the fence. We sprinted through the darkness, sloshing across a muddy expanse (Michael's flip-flops forever claimed by the muck) until we secured our concert real estate: a patch of relatively dry dirt crowned with our makeshift blanket—a “borrowed” garbage bag. We collapsed for a few hours before awakening to the nascent ecosystem of what would later be christened “Shakedown Street”—vendors hawking fragrant cheese burritos, tie-dyed treasures, and various consciousness-expanding offerings.

The 125,000-strong crowd witnessed what has since become enshrined in Dead lore as one of the Dead's greatest performances ever, with Marshall Tucker Band and New Riders of the Purple Sage warming up the massive gathering before the Dead took the stage.

Decades later, as I boarded the flight to Vegas with my wife Paula to meet my old friend Lance and our buddy Mikey, the anticipation of experiencing Dead & Company at the most advanced concert venue ever constructed had me feeling like that wide-eyed college sophomore at Raceway Park all over again. The juxtaposition is almost surreal—from the raw, outdoor festival atmosphere of Englishtown to the meticulously engineered sensory experience of The Sphere. Despite this evolution in venue and technology, the essence of connection through music remains the beating heart of the Dead experience.

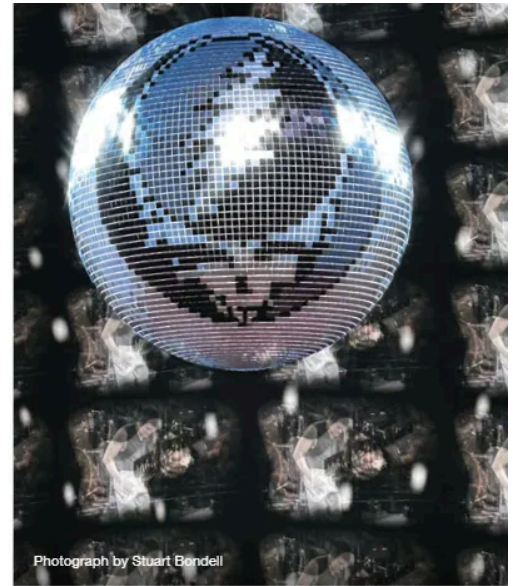
The Cosmic Vessel: Architecture and Technology

Confronting The Sphere from the outside evokes the awe of encountering an alien spacecraft that's claimed territory on the Vegas Strip. The massive 366-foot tall structure with its fully programmable LED exterior broadcasts swirling Dead iconography—dancing bears, lightning bolts, and skeleton imagery all rendered in high-definition brilliance.

Inside, the scale becomes even more apparent. The 160,000 square foot LED display wraps around and above, creating a 270-degree field of vision. We were lucky enough to secure tickets in section 306—the sweet spot positioned perfectly in the middle of The Sphere with unobstructed views of the entire visual canvas, including the ceiling. (Many Sphere veterans consider these the prime seats, as some sections in the 200 level have partially obstructed views of the top dome.) The “infrasound haptic system” means you don't just hear the bass—you feel it resonating through your entire body.



Photograph by Ryan Bondell



Photograph by Stuart Bondell

The Dead Forever Experience: Musical Journey

Dead & Company—featuring original Grateful Dead members Bob Weir and Mickey Hart alongside John Mayer, Oteil Burbridge, Jeff Chimenti, and Jay Lane—have created something that feels both reverently nostalgic and wildly futuristic.

The show began with Sam Cooke's “Good Times,” with Bob reaching for impressive falsettos as the Sphere's interior transformed into a massive hangar. From there, the band launched into a perfectly sequenced first set: “Playing in the Band” took us from Haight-Ashbury into cosmic realms, “Cold Rain and Snow” blew in on swirling purple clouds, “Dancing in the Street” morphed the Sphere into a Tron-like video game environment, “They Love Each Other” brought yellow flowers blanketing the dome, and “Casey Jones” wrapped things up with a high-energy finale that had the Sphere's LEDs careening through towers of flickering TVs.

The second set delivered even more spectacle: “Althea” unfolded over a tour of legendary Grateful Dead venues from the Fillmore's illuminated marquee against an orange sky to Winterland's exterior adorned with Steal Your Face logos and the soaring wooden rafters of Cornell's Barton Hall, while “Dark Star” featured a simulated technical “glitch” reminiscent of early computer screen failures that transitioned to a retro-graphic blackjack game. “Passenger” was perfectly nestled

within “Dark Star,” sandwiched between verses one and two in a touching nod to Phil Lesh. “Jack Straw” submerged us in bioluminescent visuals, and “Fire on the Mountain” featured vocal contributions from Oteil, Bob, John, and even a spoken word section from Mickey Hart. “Drums/Space” became a multi-sensory wormhole, while “Black Peter” (my GD nickname), “Brown-Eyed Women,” and “Estimated Prophet” provided emotional depth with visuals that paid homage to the band’s history, before “Not Fade Away” wrapped everything with a montage spanning six decades of Dead culture.

Perhaps most moving was the tribute to the late Phil Lesh. Having recently witnessed Grahame Lesh host the final night of “Unbroken Chain: A Celebration of the Life and Music of Phil Lesh” at The Capitol Theatre in Port Chester just this past March 17th (with the legendary Phil Lesh Quintet lineup of Warren Haynes, Jimmy Herring, Rob Barraco, John Molo, and Brian Rashap delivering an extraordinary four-hour performance), the Sphere’s tribute carried special resonance. The band honored Phil through performances like “Passenger”—a song with music by Lesh—and during “Dark Star,” the visuals created a Matrix-esque tower reading, “Love is the only future.” In these moments, the technological spectacle gave way to something profoundly human—a reminder that beneath all the innovation, this remains a celebration of connection.

The Long, Strange Trip Continues

As someone who’s followed this musical odyssey from the packed fields of Englishtown ‘77 to the technological marvel of The Sphere in 2025, I can attest that while much has changed, the essential spirit remains. The improvisational heart, the communal energy, and the boundary-pushing ethos that defined those early shows lives on in this new incarnation—now enhanced by technology that the original lineup could have only dreamed about.

After nearly five decades following this band in its various incarnations, I can say with certainty: The Sphere doesn’t just house the Dead experience—it elevates it to a plane that perfectly bridges their psychedelic past with our technological present. 🌿



Craving more Dead content? Visit our website for the full review.



38



Photograph by Ryan Bondell

Dead-Inspired Glass Elevates Consumption

Few product collaborations feel as naturally aligned as the recent partnership between Grateful Dead and Stündenglass, resulting in the limited edition Legacy Patchwork Gravity Infuser and complementary Modul + Dok Deluxe Travel Set.

The Gravity Infuser features Dead iconography while maintaining the brand’s signature 360° rotation system that uses gravity, water, and rotation to generate smooth, consistent plumes of vapor. Aircraft-grade aluminum, borosilicate glass, and surgical-grade stainless steel combine for substantial feel and performance.

I tested the travel-friendly Modul + Dok set during a Vegas Dead & Company trip. This compact hookah-style attachment connects to the main unit while functioning independently when needed. Using the device in our hotel room before heading to The Sphere created the perfect pre-show ritual. The theatrical delivery method built anticipation for the band’s audiovisual spectacle while allowing appreciation of subtle flavor notes from premium Nevada-grown Chem D.

For Deadheads seeking quality consumption technology with cultural resonance, this collaboration delivers impressive results.



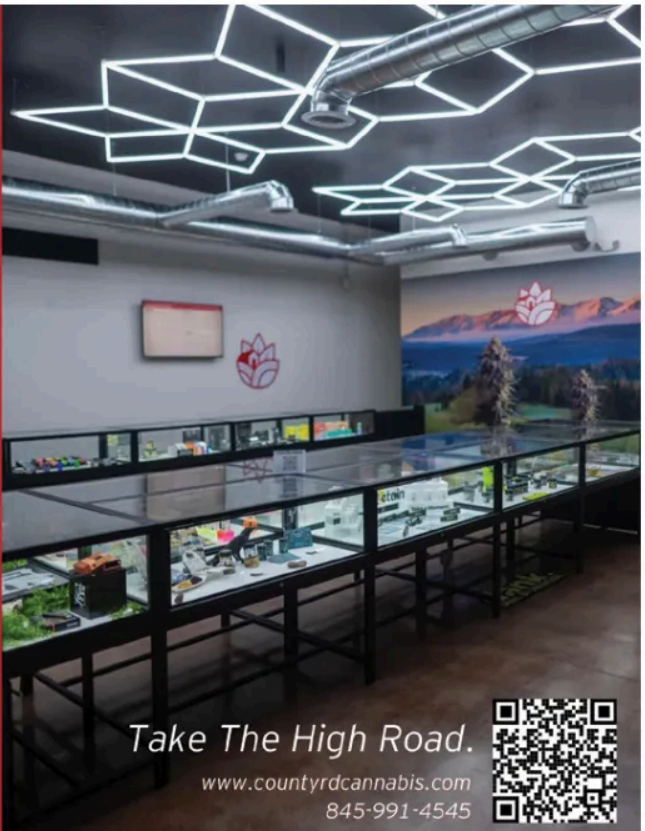


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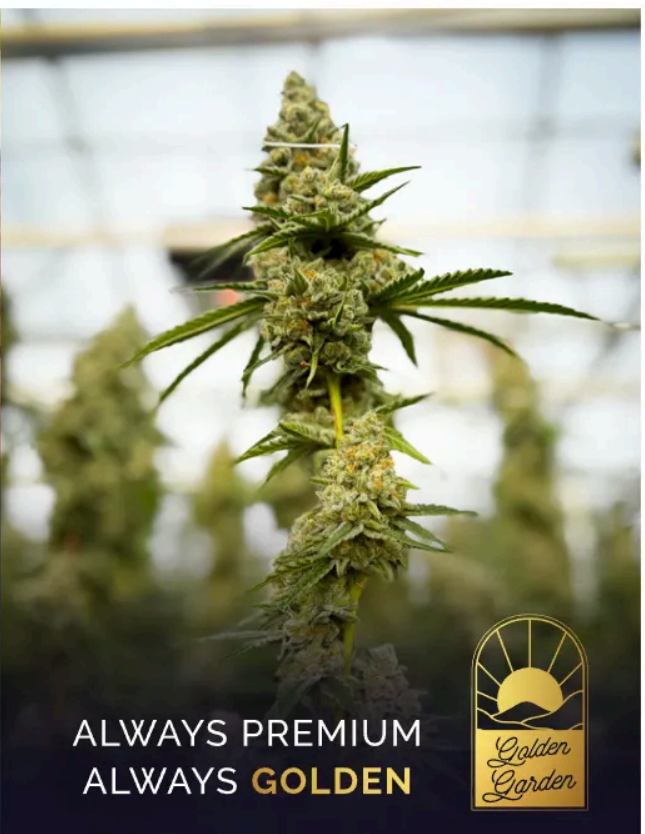
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2025 Festival Round-up

by Pasquale Zinna

Highlighting some of the in the greater tri-state area. While small, this round-up serves as a primer for the spread of incredible music and art that takes place so close to home.



Four Tet & Friends May 17-18

Last year, Four Tet brought a gaggle of his friends along for what would become an especially rambunctious party. At the NYC public art and event space Under The K Bridge, it showcased the likes of garage powerhouse Sammy Virji, the frenetic dance-floor approach of Chloe Robinson, and a host of adjacent acts. For many, it was their first time in the 7-acre compound that lines and beautifies the Newtown Creek waterfront. For 2025, Four Tet returns with a much larger pack of friends in tow across two stages. Bringing with him a series of names like Joy Orbison, Nia Archives, Hamdi, Mala, and Overmono, the vibe is already unmistakable. Right at the height of springtime in New York, it's primed to become yet another packed-out weekend under the Kosciuszko Bridge, but that should come as no surprise. Putting on the skillsets of prime-time producers, DJs, and musicians has always been one of the revolving tools in the Four Tet war chest, and the payoff for attendees is never short on dopamine and all-night moves with the proper crew.

Mountain Jam June 20-22

The venerable Mountain Jam finally returns after a 5 year hiatus that paralleled a dearth of notable festivals in upstate NY. Founded by Radio Woodstock in celebration of its 25th anniversary as an organization, Mountain Jam has held a spot near and dear to the hearts of music heads from across the country. Hosting an array of americana, electronica, funk, jam, and rock, the legendary affair has brought together continental juggernauts and audacious up-and-comers alike across its roughly 20 year history as an institution of quintessential American music. In its heyday, it grew from a 3000 person regional get-down to one of the most viable and beloved hallmarks in the American festival circuit. Having outlived its former home at Hunter Mountain, save for what would prove to be a single year spent at Bethel Woods, its revival comes to Belleayre Mountain in Highmount, NY. With its promise of a reduced headcount and more intimate fan experience, plus the name brand guarantee of impeccable talent, all signs point to a particularly auspicious year for the return of Mountain Jam.



Borderland September 12-14

Returning to New York's Knox Farm State Park for a seventh year around the sun, the Borderland Music and Arts Festival has fast become a growing member of the Empire State's long history with rock, indie, bluegrass, reggae, and jazz. The festival is anchored by the indie-rock legends Vampire Weekend, and buoyed by a supporting cast that includes The Wallers, Khruangbin, Nathaniel Rateliff and The Night Sweats, and New Orleans' favorite troubadours, The Soul Rebels. Not content to simply stop with a killer lineup, Borderland also hosts its very own Renaissance Revival, bringing a magnifying glass over the rich, interwoven histories of the Great Lakes and the Great White North. It showcases the artisanal and industrious works born out of the Buffalo Niagara Valley, and underpins the regional spirit and enthusiasm that elevates Borderland to a position of warm welcome amongst newfound travelers and longtime denizens alike.

Submersion Festival October 2-4

Returning for their 5th year in operation and 4th year as an overnight camping event, Submersion Festival has become akin to a family tradition for both revelers and tastemakers alike. Spearheaded by a team of friendly event producers and promoters from across the northeast, Submersion is nestled away at Paradise Lakes in the NJ Pine Barrens. While the lineup undergoes its slow and measured rollout for 2025, it continues to be a haven for cutting-edge and world-renowned DJs, producers, and musicians, bringing together influences ranging from trip-hop to drum and bass, house, and the best and brightest in contemporary bass music. Taking advantage of state-of-the-art sound systems and modern engineering, every act is given a platform on their scenic lakeside and woodland stages. Coupled with the fresh fall weather, the revelry speaks for itself. The Submersion Festival has gradually carved out a space for itself in the landscape of contemporary events, sure to once again deliver on the promise of exceptional art, sound, and environment.





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Retail Profile: Farm to Dispensary

Cultivating Cannabis Community in the Hudson Valley

Meet George Vlamis, Sharif and AJ Jamal, Owners of Farmers Choice Dispensary

by Ranch Guerra

We started formulating The Other one year ago, establishing our countercultural magazine with a special focus on cannabis culture for the Hudson Valley and NYC regions. Over the years, I had only visited the lands north of Westchester County on a few occasions. Now I venture up for a weekend trip away as often as possible, experiencing the allure of nature's majesty, the beauty of the people who make up the communities, and the local cannabis shops.

Recently, while on a late winter roundabout of Dutchess County, I got to tour Farmers Choice Dispensary in Fishkill. The floor is lined with astroturf, as a life-size cow watches over the ATM. Mason jars, full of flower, hang from a large barn-like structure lined with point of sale stations to place orders. This place is big enough to house multiple brand pop-ups, a wall to wall selection of products, and even a restored John Deere tractor that I got to sit in for a photo op. There's even a "grow your own" section for at-home cultivation supplies. I spoke with co-owners Sharif Jamal, AJ Jamal, and George Vlamis about their vision and future plans.

What inspired you to expand into cannabis with Farmers Choice in Fishkill?

SJ: George and I started talking about owning a dispensary when the California market opened up. After years of waiting, we finally got our chance when NY announced they were going legal. It took years of planning, but we eventually got our approval from the state and launched our vision of a dispensary.

The name "Farmers Choice" evokes a strong connection to agriculture and local sourcing. What inspired this vision for your Fishkill dispensary, and how does it reflect your business philosophy?

SJ: The Hudson Valley has always been a destination for visiting local farms for great products. We wanted to give the customers a familiar experience with the twist of cannabis being the focus of our market! We have spent the past few years developing relationships with local cultivators and we thought this would be the best way to showcase their products.

I notice you're hosting regular vendor pop-ups and events like "Women in Weed" at Farmers Choice. How important is community building and education to your dispensary model?

GV: We love having vendor pop-ups because they allow our customers to engage with the local farmers and truly learn and understand about the different products that are available. It also allows our team to gain valuable knowledge on the products that we are selling. We have events like "Women in Weed" to showcase the cultivators who have helped us launch our brand. Without these partners, we could have never accomplished what we have.

The Hudson Valley has a rich agricultural heritage. How are you connecting with local cannabis cultivators and producers, and what role do you see Farmers Choice playing in the region's emerging cannabis ecosystem?

AJ: The Hudson Valley is home to some of the largest cannabis producing farms in the state, and our centralized location allows us to showcase these local products. We have created the real farm-to-bowl experience.

What was your goal with the retail experience you've created at Farmers Choice?

AJ: Our goal was to create an extremely customer-centric experience. We want everyone to feel welcomed and comfortable shopping at Farmers Choice. The farm market theme helps to take away the stigma of cannabis shopping.

The Fishkill location gives you access to both Hudson Valley locals and NYC weekenders. How do these different customer demographics shape your product offerings and store experience?

GV: We knew the locals would be familiar and comfortable with a farm market and that customers from the city love exploring farms to escape the everyday hustle and bustle of their lives. With such a large variety of products, our customers can taste flavors from across the state.

Looking at your product selection, I noticed several "Staff Picks." How do you approach staff education and empower your team to make authentic recommendations?

AJ: Our entire team has had extensive budtender training from our vendor partners. We continuously encourage our team to be educated on the latest and greatest products available.

What unique challenges have you faced in launching a cannabis business in the Hudson Valley, and how have you addressed them?

SJ: The biggest challenge was securing a space and holding onto it for years, while waiting for the state to award us our license. We always had the vision of building our dispensary in the Hudson Valley and found the local community to be very supportive.

Farmers Choice has a notable focus on accessories and consumption devices, like Puffco products. What's your philosophy on helping customers find the right tools to enjoy their cannabis?

SJ: We wanted Farmers Choice to be your one-stop shop for all things cannabis. No need to head to the smoke shop for your glass or rolling papers. We have it all available for you here. All of our products are accessible on the floor, so customers have the opportunity to touch and feel the accessories before they make a decision on which is best for them.

The dispensary appears to balance both premium products and more accessible options. How do you approach product curation and pricing strategy?

GV: Cannabis should be accessible to everyone, whether you are an everyday smoker living on a budget, or a casual smoker who can afford it all. We try to keep a variety that caters to all budgets and customers. That's how we ended up with such a large selection.

What future plans do you have for Farmers Choice as the New York cannabis market continues to develop?

SJ: The goal is to grow the Farmers Choice brand and to continue to share the amazing experience we have created in our Fishkill location. The next Farmers Choice project is something we have been looking forward to for 4 years! Farmers Choice Dispensary "The Barn" will be coming to New Paltz, NY.

What's your personal go-to product at Farmers Choice these days, and why would you recommend it to our readers?

GV: The Rove vape has always been my favorite. It's got a great taste and a smooth pull.

AJ: I have been a big fan of edibles, in particular the 1906 pills. The "Genius" pills are great, and all of the brand's varieties are fast and effective.

SJ: My go-to's are the beverages. I am fan of them all, whether it's Ayrloom, Tune, Harney Brothers, or Weed Water. They all have great flavors and are not overly powerful. Also, you won't get a hangover from any of them! 🍷

INSIDE NEW YORK'S THRIVING Psychedelic Subculture

by Jack Gorsline

Without bustling in the open market, like so many of New York's Cannabis industry leaders, the "psychedelic renaissance" of the last decade continues to stoke interest and gain momentum. The Empire State's psychedelic subculture has been steadily thriving in the underground and beyond, drawing curiosity and controversy as a growing number of New Yorkers explore and use certain psychedelics like psilocybin mushrooms, LSD, ayahuasca, and more.

Despite the persistent oppression of federal prohibition, New York's psychedelic underground has been thriving in the shadows for decades now. However, you might be surprised to read that today many psychedelic-oriented community grounds operate in broad daylight (albeit in a legal gray area compared to many of their scientific research counterparts conducting above-ground research in academic and pharmaceutical labs around the world). As for the semi-underground scene in the Big Apple specifically, veteran psychonauts and first-time psychedelic seekers certainly have no shortage of

psychedelic community groups to explore across a diverse range of demographics. Much like the politically bipartisan support behind the psychedelic renaissance here in the US, it truly speaks to the unifying nature of psychedelics that more and more New Yorkers are experiencing amidst their rapidly evolving psychedelic ecosystem. Be sure to check out The Other's online coverage of the latest psychedelic policy developments up in Albany. In the meantime, if you're reading this and wondering where you might be able to "find the others," the following list serves as a great place to start:

The Psychedelic Assembly

With ideological roots dating back to 2019 and an official opening ceremony back in September of 2022, The Psychedelic Assembly is located right in the heart of midtown Manhattan, just blocks away from the United Nations International HQ and The Assembly itself. Supported in part by a robust membership and a variety of events, both ticketed and free, this is also the world's first and only Psychedelic Athenaeum. Generally speaking, it serves as an ever-exploratory minded

outpost that is fittingly eclectic for psychonautically-minded locals and wanderers alike. The Assembly hosts regular "Find the Others" networking nights that are typically slated for the first Friday of every new moon cycle. These include comedy nights, book clubs, author readings and most recently an expansion of the Athenaeum's hours of operation. They are now open from 2:00-9:00 PM Tuesday-Friday and 12:00-9:00 PM on Saturdays.

Brooklyn Psychedelic Society

Founded in 2015, right in the heart of Prospect Park, the Brooklyn Psychedelic Society's mission is "to maximize the safety, accessibility and transformational potential of psychedelic journeying in community." With over 7,000 members strong and membership tiers starting at just \$10 per month, BPS' regular gatherings offer an intriguing avenue for community access. Psychonaut-oriented events and education offer a clear interweaving of psychedelic adjacent or psychedelically inclined

demographics. This includes those who might stem from the psychedelic underground, coming from largely marginalized communities and demographics. Upcoming noteworthy BPS events include: a neurodiversity community known as Movement is Prayer, as well as a literary presentation and writing workshop hosted by Nicholas Powers, author of Black Psychedelic Revolution. Also, a sure-to-be extraordinary Bicycle Day Extravaganza that includes a bike ride and picnic set for Saturday, April 19.



**Brooklyn
Psychedelic
Society**



Psych•delics for
Climate Action
(PSYCA)

Psychedelics for Climate Action (PSYCA)

Founded in the heart of New York City by Green Spaces New York Co-Founder and longtime climate activist Marissa Feinberg, Psychedelics for Climate Action's (PSYCA) focuses on building inroads for next-generation climate action discourse in psychedelic-adjacent communities. It has proven wildly popular and follows a successful Psychedelic Climate Week in New York from last year as new PSYCA chapters have quickly cropped up across Miami and Boston in 2025 already. PSYCA's membership ranks include "founders, entrepreneurs,

change-makers, creatives, explorers, philanthropists, authors, doctors, scientists, speakers, investors, researchers, marketers, professors, catalysts, environmentalists, artists & more." The interdisciplinary appeal of PSYCA's organizational mission is quickly establishing a new standard for 21st century advocacy at large. This comes fresh off a successful event at the Psychedelic Assembly in late February, as well as Feinberg's recent presentation in Austin, Texas during SXSW's opening weekend Psychedelics Track.



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Viewing Trauma Objectively with **AT-HOME KETAMINE**

by Jessica Klein

Since his mom passed away more than a decade ago, Michael Morgan, 37, was stuck in what he calls the grief phase. Years of talk therapy and antidepressants still left him feeling like he needed a reset, so he decided to try something new: at-home ketamine therapy.

Morgan donned headsets that played a voice-guided track supplied by the telehealth company, Mindbloom, and wedged a ketamine tablet between his lips and gums. As the drug kicked in, he reflected. "I want to go to the moment my mom passed away." Next thing he knew, he was in the hospital holding his mom and sister's hands. Morgan's only thought was, "Wow, what a beautiful moment between my sister, my mom, and I."

He hadn't been able to witness that memory for very long, let alone in a positive light—it provoked too much sadness. With ketamine therapy, he managed to face his mom's passing with objectivity, which allowed him to break free of old thought patterns and reframe it. As he puts it, "trauma [is] history, not identity... Something that happened, not who I am." Morgan's ability to process painful emotions had transformed.



The US Food and Drug Administration first approved ketamine as a clinical anesthetic for humans in 1970. It wasn't until 2000 that the first "placebo-controlled, double-blinded" study by Berman et al., showed ketamine could work quickly to ameliorate symptoms for patients with depression.

Exactly how ketamine functions remains a bit of a mystery. However, it's known to work on NMDA receptors, rather than those affected by selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) commonly prescribed for depression. This "helps stimulate neuroplasticity," says Dr. Gail Serruya, whose Pennsylvania clinic, Voyage Healing, provides in-office ketamine therapy. "It also decreases our default mode network...that is hyperactive with depression." In other words, ketamine is thought to tone down negative rumination cycles, like Morgan's grief phase, and make space for new perspectives.

Historically, psychiatric ketamine treatments took place in clinical settings where practitioners closely watched patients undergoing costly treatments. Thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the government to waive in-person exams previously required to prescribe controlled substances, the ketamine telehealth industry has boomed recently. Several companies now offer at-home ketamine administration across most US states.

Users typically start with low doses and ramp up over time depending on their response. Morgan, who has undergone a six-session "program," says his dosage increased twice. By the third session, he

saw visuals. By the fifth or sixth, after deciding he wanted to see his friend who passed away, he says he witnessed "sacred geometry...almost an equation for the whole universe." Simultaneously, the feeling of how his late friend made him laugh washed over him.

Despite reports of positive experiences, there's good reason to be wary of companies offering ketamine telehealth. "They're driven by capitalistic market pressures...so they're selling ongoing daily ketamine, sometimes large quantities...because if they stop, they don't make money," says Serruya. Since researchers haven't studied the long-term effects of daily ketamine use, she warns that companies should exercise caution.

Then there's the ever-shifting legal landscape. Mindbloom's Chief Strategy Officer, Michael Petegorsky, says they offer "limited, incremental dosing." They work to stay compliant by constantly monitoring changes in state laws. "We spend a lot of money on legal fees," according to Petegorsky.

Today, practitioners prescribe ketamine for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, but Petegorsky emphasizes, "there's research coming out around obsessive-compulsive disorder, anorexia, and bulimia." Serruya expresses optimism about the future of ketamine therapy, but advises that if the industry becomes too money-driven it could create unsafe conditions for users and face regulatory backlash. "All this incredible healing potential will be shut down," she stresses.

The Spectrum of Ketamine Telehealth

Ketamine telehealth company operations vary from very hands-off to more measured and involved. The following outfits represent these respective approaches:

Joyous: For \$129/month, users receive a month's worth of microdose-able ketamine "troches" (waxy squares that melt in the gums) all at once. Deemed questionable by clinical practitioners and other ketamine company operators, it lacks supervision and supplies bulk ket-packs. Also, Joyous can make it near impossible to contact representatives and messages users primarily via auto-text.

Mindbloom: Providing patients with up to six doses at once for \$209/session, Mindbloom offers an app replete with musical and/or voice guiding audio recordings for the experience, sometimes followed by sessions with company care providers. Clients' blood pressure is monitored with helpers on site the first time in case of bad reactions. 🌱

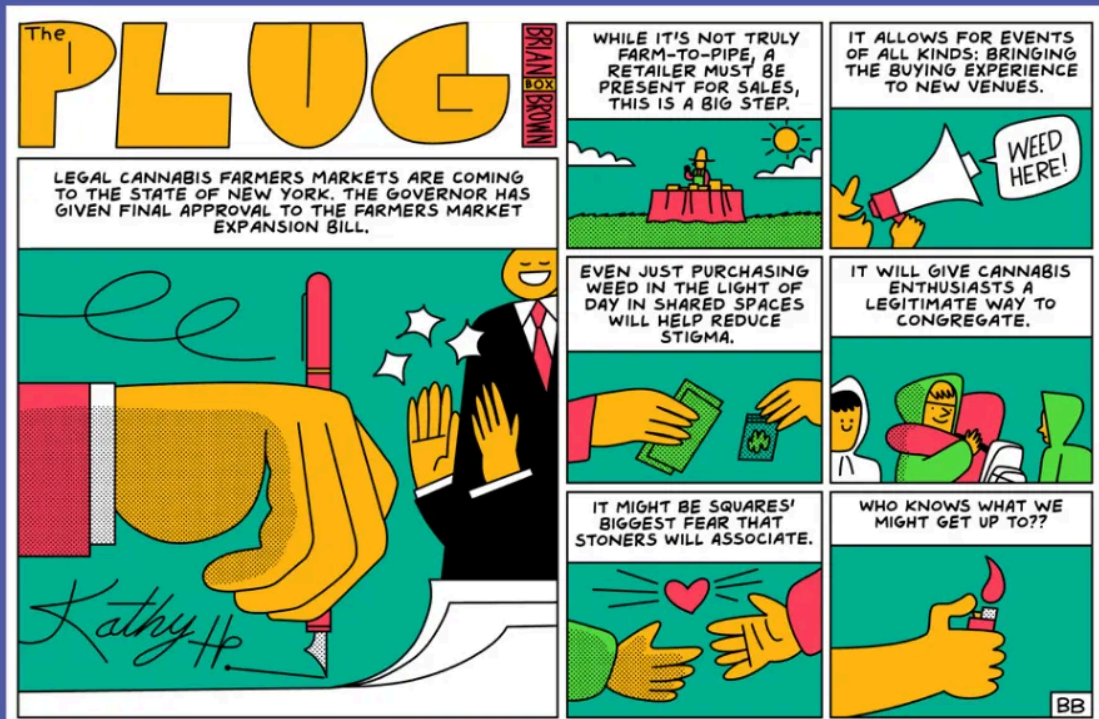


Psychedelics and Mental Health

A New Frontier in Healing

by Dr. Manesh Girn, PhD

Mental health disorders are at an all-time high with rates of depression and anxiety skyrocketing over the past two decades. Conventional medications like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and benzodiazepines, though beneficial for many, often have slow onsets, significant side effects, and/or limited effectiveness. This growing crisis has reignited interest in psychedelics as promising therapeutic tools—especially psilocybin, the primary compound in “magic mushrooms.” Clinical trials at institutions like Johns Hopkins, NYU, and Imperial College London have found that psilocybin-assisted therapy has remarkable capacity to provide rapid, lasting relief from depression. FDA approval is possible by 2027 and the potential expands as research increasingly supports effectiveness for end-of-life distress, anxiety, substance use, and other conditions—with over 400 clinical trials underway across North America and Europe!



How Psychedelics Work Differently

Unlike conventional medications that mainly work to suppress symptoms, psychedelic therapy is aimed at facilitating lasting psychological and emotional healing. Psilocybin and similar psychedelics are scientifically proven to make the brain temporarily function in a more interconnected and flexible manner, allowing users to confront and process deep-seated emotions, trauma, and self-limiting beliefs more effectively than traditional therapies. Simultaneously, psychedelics enhance neuroplasticity and help us create new neuronal connections, thereby helping us solidify new neural pathways. These combined effects may explain why a single psychedelic session can lead to long-lasting improvements in mood and well-being.

Synergistic Potential with THC and CBD

Cannabis and psychedelics might not seem like obvious companions, but they share some fascinating commonalities and potential synergies even though they work via different brain systems. Whereas psychedelics, like psilocybin, mainly work via the serotonin system (the serotonin 2A receptor in particular), THC and CBD both work via the endocannabinoid system.

THC, as you know, also induces consciousness-altering effects—although not nearly as immersive or intense as psychedelics. That said, many people report having psychological insights and breakthroughs using cannabis while its effects can become psychedelic-like at high dosages. Anecdotal reports also suggest THC may amplify a psychedelic experience when taken at the peak, meanwhile others find it helps ease anxiety during the onset or come-down (but this has yet to be studied scientifically).

CBD, on the other hand, is not consciousness-altering, but it does have some beneficial effects that are similar to psilocybin. Namely, both compounds exhibit anti-inflammatory and neuro-protective properties, meaning they support brain health and improve resilience against stress. Some individuals also report that CBD helps reduce anxiety during psychedelic experiences (yet to be examined in controlled studies as well).

Despite promising anecdotal evidence, the interactions between THC, CBD, and psychedelics remain largely scientifically unexplored. As research advances, we may soon uncover more about how these powerful natural compounds can work together to promote healing and self-discovery.

A New Era for Mental Health Treatment

With the rapid pace of promising clinical findings, we are entering an era where psychedelics may become mainstream therapeutic tools. Combined with the growing acceptance of cannabis in medicine, we are witnessing a fundamental shift in how we approach mental well-being. In my opinion, that is long overdue.

In upcoming articles, we'll dive deeper into the brain mechanisms underlying psychedelic effects, their potential for brain injury recovery and neurodegenerative diseases, and much more. Stay tuned as we continue to navigate this exciting frontier. Despite promising anecdotal evidence, the interactions between THC, CBD, and psychedelics remain largely scientifically unexplored. As research advances, we may soon uncover more about how these powerful natural compounds can work together to promote healing and self-discovery.

Manesh Girn is a neuroscientist and psychedelic researcher who is dedicated to advancing our understanding of effects of psychedelics on our minds and brains, and how cutting-edge neuroscientific research can inform approaches to healing, growth, and personal transformation.

BUD OF THE VALLEY

Celebrating Your Favorite Budtenders

by Alan Greenwald

Spring brings our second installment of “Bud of the Valley,” where we continue to celebrate the talented individuals behind the counters at our favorite dispensaries. Your votes have poured in, and we’re thrilled to introduce this quarter’s featured budtender. This popular column shines a spotlight on the knowledgeable guides who shape our cannabis experiences throughout the Hudson Valley and NYC. Keep those votes coming as we recognize these local heroes who bring expertise and heart to our growing cannabis community!

Meet Sai: Verdi Cannabis’ Chelsea Connection

When you walk into Verdi Cannabis in Chelsea, you might be greeted by Sai, whose journey from cannabis curiosity to community builder exemplifies the new generation of industry professionals. With a commitment to education and genuine care for customers, Sai represents the evolving face of New York’s cannabis culture.

Why did you become a Budtender?

I was shopping at the illegal stores and started wondering, “What is it that I’m smoking and where did it come from? Why does my throat always feel weird after partaking, and why wasn’t I getting high from these products?” This led me down a path where I started educating myself and others on the benefits of utilizing legal and regulated cannabis!

What is the most rewarding aspect of being a Budtender?

I guess it’s the sense of community. It truly feels like one big family here at Verdi Cannabis – especially when we have events. It’s an amazing feeling of connection as it brings together past, present, and future budtenders!

What’s your most memorable sale or customer you served since starting as a Budtender?

Within the first few months of being a budtender, I remember assisting a woman and finding her an array of products that I felt best suited her needs. I educated her about the benefits of each product. By the end of the transaction, she praised me on my cannabis knowledge and how well I was able to communicate that information to her. She even asked to take a selfie with me! This type of thing has happened to me many times since then, but I found this sale to be truly special considering that I often doubt having the same level of knowledge as my peers.

50



What are your observations of the Chelsea retail cannabis market and what makes it unique?

Chelsea’s market is bustling and vibrant. Customers run the full spectrum of what NYC has to offer, from the 21 year old exchange student to a 90 year old grandparent. For them, cannabis is much more than simply getting high. People use cannabis for many medicinal purposes, which I find so amazing because growing up, I simply saw it as a tool to escape reality.

What are your favorite products?

Flower is my favorite product by far. I’m a little picky, though. I love an indica or hybrid strain that’s more indica-dominant and that has a cheesy or skunk-like smell. Some of my favorite indicas in the market right now are Umami’s “Ice Cream Cake,” Dank’s “Girl Scout Cookies,” and Matter’s “Roasted Garlic Margy”—absolute chef’s kiss!!

Want to nominate your favorite budtender?
Scan the QR code:







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